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LETTER

TO

L O R D M A H O N ,

BEING AN ANSWER

TO

HIS LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR

OF

WASHINGTON'S WRITINGS.

BY JARED SPARKS.

B O S T O N :
L I T T L E , B R O W N , A N D C O M P A N Y .
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LETTER

TO

L O R D M A H O N .

MY LORD,

I HAVE had the honor to receive from you a copy of the Letter, which you have addressed to me as a Rejoinder to my Reply to certain strictures on the manner in which I had edited Washington's Writings. In that Reply, it was my main object to explain the plan and principles upon which it was originally designed that the work should be executed, and which, as I thought, you and others had strangely overlooked or misapprehended; and also to show, that I had discharged the duties of an editor in strict conformity with that plan and those principles. While thus reviewing my past labors and vindicating my integrity of purpose, I had occasion to speak with pointed disapprobation of two or three serious

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charges in a recent volume of your History, which I knew to be founded in error, and which I was wholly unable to reconcile with the courtesy and candor to be expected in a work from your pen.

It is true, my Lord, as you suggest, I had not then read that volume, and, if I had done so, it could not in any degree have modified my opinion of the passages which I had seen, and to which my remarks were confined. I did not pretend to "answer your book," nor any part of it except the brief extracts here alluded to, which are in no way affected by the general contents of the work. If I had perused the volume, most assuredly I should not have said, "a British historian might, perhaps, find something to commend in the result of my attempts"; referring to the efforts I had made, in the notes and illustrations, to correct the erroneous opinions and false impressions, which had prevailed in America concerning the motives and designs of the British Ministry and military commanders during the war. On this point, your recognition of the fact is explicit and full.

You also say, "Mr. Sparks's own share in these notes and illustrations is written, not only with much ability, but in a spirit, on most points, of candor and fairness, and the whole collection is of great historical interest and importance." I

trust that I am not insensible to your own candor and fairness in forming this estimate, nor to the liberality of the terms in which your judgment is expressed.

But the questions at issue between us are of a different character, and require to be discussed by themselves. You expressed the opinion, that I "had printed no part of Washington's correspondence precisely as he wrote it," which opinion you conceived yourself "bound not to conceal." You also charged me with making additions to the original text, and unwarrantable alterations and omissions for the sake of embellishment ; leaving your readers to draw the conclusion, which, if they rested on your declarations alone, they could not but draw, that the editor was totally incompetent to the task he had undertaken.

You now withdraw the charge of making additions, unquestionably the most important, but you say, "On other points I must declare myself prepared, though with all possible respect for your observations, to adhere to and maintain the opinions I advanced." The withdrawal of the first charge might close that part of the discussion at once, if you did not still insist on your right to make it at the time, relying on authority which you then supposed to be entitled to confidence.

Let us briefly consider this claim before we proceed farther.

The case stands thus. You found in one of Washington's letters, as printed by me, the passage which here follows in italics; "but is it possible that any sensible *nation upon earth can be imposed upon by such a cobweb scheme or gauze covering?*" This passage did not appear in a copy of the same letter as printed by Mr. Reed. Whereupon you charged me, in a strain of sarcasm, (certainly unusual in your Lordship's compositions, and therefore the more to be regarded,) with having "manufactured" it for the occasion, and by way of embellishment to the original text. Having ascertained that Washington actually wrote these words, absurd as they seemed to you, and that they had been omitted in the other printed copy by some accident, you now withdraw the charge. And you add, "I will even go farther, and express my regret that, believing as I did the charge to be well founded and fully proved, I adopted a tone towards you, in one or two other passages of my History, different from that which I should have used had I thought you wholly free from this imputation." I am very ready to accept this as a fair recantation, though not so fully as I could have done, if its value were not diminished by the remarks with which it is connected.

You maintain, that, under the circumstances, you were justified in making the charge, and in throwing out insinuations not less erroneous, and scarcely less offensive. You ask, "Having found these passages, I will put it to any candid person, and will include you, Sir, in the number, whether I was to blame for the conclusion I drew from them? Had I not a right to say, that the 'cobweb schemes or gauze coverings' seemed to be of your own manufacture? Had I not a right to intimate a suspicion, in one or two other parts of my History, whether such *improvements* had not extended farther; whether the same manufactory had not been busy elsewhere?" As you put these questions to me personally, I must answer, that I can neither allow, nor conceive for a moment, that you had any such right.

What was the real ground upon which you stood? From fifteen words of suspected addition, and the supposed change of one other word, which you have since acknowledged is at least doubtful, you ventured to hazard the opinion, and to promulgate it in an authoritative manner, that I had made like additions and changes, or, in your own phrase, "manufactured" them, throughout Washington's correspondence; an editorial license, which you properly designate as "not at all short of a literary forgery." Let me ask you, in all plain-

ness, whether you had a right, upon any principles of fair criticism, to draw so broad an inference, implicating not more the literary ability and judgment of the editor than his integrity as a man, from such exceedingly narrow premises?

Every one knows how frequently errors result from accident, or through the mistakes of transcribers and printers, in publishing original manuscripts. A moderate degree of forbearance might have inclined you to suspect an error from some of these sources, and cautioned you to wait till your proofs were better established. The event has shown that this course would have been more judicious, certainly more just. I must dissent, therefore, from your claim of right to charge me with manufacturing "cobweb schemes or gauze coverings."

We may examine this claim a little farther, as applied to "one or two other places" in your History, to which you allude. In one of these, after remarking in the text, that the Declaration of Independence "excited much less notice than might have been expected," you deem it proper to add in a note, "Washington, however, in his public letter to Congress, (unless Mr. Jared Sparks has *improved* this passage,) says, that the troops had testified 'their warmest approbation.'" In another place, referring to certain passages in

Washington's letters, you administer the caution to your readers, "How far Mr. Sparks may have either garbled these passages, or suppressed others, I know not." And why should you not know? You had before you a copy of Washington's "Official Letters to the Honorable American Congress," published in London more than half a century ago, in two volumes. This work you have more than once quoted. It contains the passages you cite in both these cases from letters to the President of Congress, (Vol. I. p. 185, Vol. II. p. 223,) printed in precisely the same words as in "Washington's Writings." And yet, with these previously printed letters in your hands, you seem not to have consulted them, but you were willing, without inquiry, to hazard these injurious imputations. Was this justifiable under any circumstances?

As you have retracted the main charge, however, I am so far content; and I should have let it rest without comment, if you had not attempted to vindicate your right to make it on such grounds as appear to me untenable.

The two other charges, first, of corrections, and, secondly, of omissions, with an unwarrantable design, although you allow them to be "far lesser charges," you undertake to sustain.

Here it is to be remarked, that your observa-

tions and strictures are presented under a double aspect. You state cases, and assign motives; the former you endeavor to explain by the latter. You imagine that you have discovered two prominent motives, which, if your discovery is genuine, must have operated to pervert my judgment, and blunt my moral perceptions, through the whole course of my editorial labors. These motives are, first, a desire to save the dignity of Washington, which led me sometimes to omit epithets and phrases, and sometimes to substitute others more appropriate to his character than those written by himself; and, secondly, a tenderness for the people of New England, moving me to leave out such parts of Washington's letters as bore hard upon their patriotism, courage, or public virtue. As these imputed motives form the groundwork of your specifications, I propose to analyze your proofs, which, from the manner in which you have stated and arranged them, must be done somewhat in detail.

As a demonstration of the first motive, you begin by reproducing the phrases "flea-bite," "lame hand," "two of this kidney," and, last of all, "Old Put." These phrases have become so well known, by the labors of yourself and others, that the false elevation, to which Washington's fame had risen by their omission, may now be consid-

ered as fairly brought to its true level. While I admit the offence in all its magnitude, and deplore its consequences, I must repel the charge of sinister design, or of any felonious intent upon the truth of history. If I could have anticipated the lively concern which the loss of these words was to excite, not only in the minds of respectable writers in the daily journals, but in that of an eminent historian, I cannot doubt that I should have weighed the matter more deliberately, and perhaps have come to a different decision.

In the case of "Old Put," however, it should be remembered that this form of speech was not a conception of Washington; he placed it within inverted commas, as copied from Mr. Reed's letter, to which he was writing an answer; so that no characteristic trait of the writer was sacrificed by changing "Old Put" into "General Putnam." I mention this as a fact proper to be noticed, but not as an apology for making the change. Had the phrase been retained, a note would naturally have referred it to Mr. Reed's letter as its source.

Now, my Lord, let these editorial delinquencies, if such you please to call them, be explained as they may, or go unexplained, I cannot resist the conviction, that, when you build on them the following formal judgment, you are striving to mag-

nify a small thing into one of most unnatural dimensions. You inquire, "What other motive can by possibility be assigned for such corrections besides the one that I have stated? Is it not quite clear in these cases, that you were seeking to use language more conformable to Washington's dignity of character than Washington could use for himself? We in England, with the highest respect for the memory of that great man, believe that in his own true form he is sufficiently exalted. It is only some of his countrymen who desire to set him upon stilts." Is it your settled belief, that these four phrases were absolutely necessary to bring Washington's dignity down to its just position in forming an estimate of his character? If you have perused the eleven volumes of his correspondence, and particularly his familiar letters and diaries in the twelfth volume, you have seen hundreds better suited to answer such a purpose. What an absurdity in me, then, to undertake to shield Washington's dignity by suppressing half a dozen, or half a hundred words or phrases, while multitudes of others equally or more objectionable on this score spring up throughout the work.

As to the "stilts," it becomes those of my countrymen, who may be obnoxious to your charge, to look to the matter. If there be any, who under-

take the hopeless task of raising Washington higher than he stands by the force of his own character, and the consent of mankind, it is but charity to remind them of their folly. As an apology for their delusion, however, it should not be forgotten, that the foible of exalting great men by exaggerated praise, or, in your more expressive language, by "setting them upon stilts," is not peculiar to any country. Even in England the pens of respectable authors are sometimes betrayed into extravagances of this sort. English historians are not always free from them.

We come now to another class of omissions, for which you assign the same motive; passages containing "the vehement language which Washington at this period applies in familiar correspondence to the English." I will take your examples in the order in which you arrange them.

You complain that a passage is omitted, in which Lord Dunmore is called an "arch-traitor to the rights of humanity." If you had examined a little more closely, you would have seen that about one third of the whole letter was omitted, not because it contained these words, but as being in substance a repetition of what was written nearly at the same time to Richard Henry Lee on the same subject, which is printed in full.

Washington, in his letter to Lee, says of Lord Dunmore, "Motives of resentment actuate his conduct, to a degree equal to the total destruction of the colony." (Writings, Vol. III. p. 216.) Would "arch-traitor" have added to the force of this description, and was it worth while to repeat a paragraph for the sake of inserting it?

Again, you take it amiss that the world should be deprived of Washington's opinion of "the English people," when he speaks of them as making "instruments of tyranny" of the Scotch, and as a "nation which seems lost to every sense of virtue, and to those feelings which distinguish a civilized people from the most barbarous savages." And you add, "You deemed, no doubt, that such phrases were not perfectly consistent with Washington's serene and lofty character. Yet I, as a Briton, can read them without resentment, and should certainly have retained them." And unquestionably so should I, if the same sentiments were not advanced on several other occasions in language not less direct and strong.

I will cite two instances. Turn to a letter to General Gage, written in answer to a discourteous one from that officer, in which Washington says, "Whether our virtuous citizens, whom the hand of tyranny has forced into arms to defend their wives, their children, and their property, or the

mercenary instruments of lawless domination, avarice, and revenge, best deserve the appellation of rebels, and the punishment of that cord, which your affected clemency has forborne to inflict," &c. (Vol. III. p. 65.) Again, in a letter to Mr. Reed, speaking of the measures adopted in England after the battle of Bunker's Hill; "I would tell them, [the Ministers,] that we had long and ardently sought for reconciliation upon honorable terms, that it had been denied us, that all our attempts after peace had proved abortive, and had been grossly misrepresented, that we had done every thing which could be expected from the best of subjects, that the spirit of freedom rises too high in us to submit to slavery, and that, if nothing else would satisfy a tyrant and his diabolical ministry, we are determined to shake off all connection with a state so unjust and unnatural." (p. 286.)

Are these expressions more "consistent with Washington's serene and lofty character," than those which you have quoted as missing? Do they differ from them in meaning or spirit? Are they not enough for a trial of your equanimity and good-nature as a Briton? If not, others of a similar purport may be found in various parts of the work. And yet you accuse me of having "omitted *all* the vehement language, which Washington at this period applies to the English."

You go on, under the same head, to cite another passage. In a letter to Mr. Reed, speaking of the evacuation of Boston, Washington describes the miserable condition of the Loyalists, who left their homes and went on ship-board with the British troops. "One or two of them," he writes, "have committed, what it would have been happy for mankind if more of them had done long ago, the act of suicide." A long paragraph including these lines was left out, although your mode of citing them leaves the impression that these alone were selected for omission.

Your comment follows. "For this harshness I can offer no excuse. I am not astonished at your desire to conceal it." Will you be astonished to learn, that it was not concealed at all? If you had turned back only four pages, and looked into the letter preceding the one from which the above sentence is omitted, you would have found these words; "One or two have done, what a great number ought to have done long ago, committed suicide. By all accounts, there never was a more miserable set of beings than these wretched creatures now are." (Vol. III. p. 343.) On a moment's comparison you will observe, that the paragraph containing the passage, which you quote from a letter to Mr. Reed, is almost a literal copy of one which was written the day before

to another person, and which is printed in its place. Hence the omission. Would you commend it as a skilful piece of editorship in a work professedly consisting of selections from a vast correspondence, to print parts of two successive letters, embodying the same thoughts in nearly the same language, because they happened to be addressed to different individuals? I believe not.

I have thus reviewed all the examples adduced by you as proofs of the first motive, that of exalting, or protecting, Washington's dignity. I will make no further comment than simply to add, that I neither admit such a motive, nor recognize in your course of argument any thing, which, rightly considered, can give countenance to your conjecture.

We will now proceed to the second motive, the alleged desire to conceal or disguise Washington's opinions of the New England people, and of the character of certain individuals among them.

In opening this subject, your words are; "My main complaint against you, and your principal allegations in defence, turn, however, on the omissions which you have made as to points in which neither Washington's character, nor yet his style, are in any degree involved." This being your

“main complaint,” it calls for a particular consideration. The grounds of it are thus stated in your own words.

“Where Washington speaks of certain shippers from New England as ‘our rascally privateersmen,’ you leave out the epithet. — Where he speaks of certain soldiers from Connecticut as showing ‘a dirty mercenary spirit,’ you leave out the former epithet. — Where he complains of the inadequate supply of money to his camp from the Provincial Assemblies, you suppress his concluding exclamation; ‘Strange conduct this!’ — One New England officer is not, it seems, to be mentioned by Washington with a touch of irony as ‘the noble Colonel Enos,’ and that epithet, likewise, is to be expunged. — Of another New England officer, Colonel Hancock, you will not allow Washington to express his suspicion with respect to a letter of his own, that ‘Colonel Hancock read what I never wrote.’ — Of a third New England officer you will not allow Washington to observe, ‘I have no opinion at all of Wooster’s enterprising genius.’ — Of a fourth, General Frye, you will not allow us to hear that ‘at present he keeps his room, and talks learnedly of emetics and cathartics. For my own part I see nothing but a declining life that matters him.’ — Nor are we to have the amusing description of a fifth New

England officer, General Ward, who first resigned on account of his ill health, and then retracted his resignation, 'on account, as he says, of its being disagreeable to some of the officers. Who those officers are, I have not heard. They have been able, no doubt, to convince him of his mistake, and that his health will allow him to be alert and active.' — You will not suffer Washington to say of Massachusetts, as compared with other States, 'there is no nation under the sun that I ever came across pays greater adoration to money than they do.' — You will not suffer him to say, when New England had failed to supply him with the gunpowder he needed, 'we have every thing but *the* thing ready for an offensive operation.' Here you think fit to omit the three most important words, 'but *the* thing,' by which Washington, in a becoming soldier-phrase, meant powder, and by this omission you have entirely altered the representation of his circumstances which he intended to convey."

After this summary, you ask the following questions. "Can any dispassionate reader be in doubt as to the course you have pursued? Can he be in doubt as to the motive which, unconsciously, perhaps, has been working in your mind? Is it not quite clear, that in these omissions you have been desirous to strike out, as far as possi-

ble, every word or phrase that could possibly touch the local fame of the gentlemen at Boston, or wound in any manner the feelings of New England?"

This array of specifications shall now be examined, with particular reference to the motive which you assign for them.

You are concerned, in the first place, that the privateers-men should not hold their appropriate place in the history of the time, after being deprived of an epithet. Surely your anxiety would have been at an end, if you had cast your eye over a letter from Washington to Congress, written two weeks afterwards, in which he says, "The plague, trouble, and vexation I have had with the crews of all the armed vessels, are inexpressible. I do believe there is not on earth a more disorderly set. Every time they come into port, we hear of nothing but mutinous complaints." (Vol. III. p. 187.) Is not this as graphic a sketch as you could desire? Would calling them "rascally" throw any darker shade over the picture? Where, then, is the attempt to conceal the misdeeds of the New England privateers-men?

Of the next epithet, little needs be said. The difference between a "dirty mercenary spirit," and a "mercenary spirit," historically or morally considered, may be decided by the acuteness of those

who delight in nice distinctions. The less discerning might venture to say that the epithet is redundant. In some sense, at least, every thing mercenary is "dirty." I am willing to consign it to the fair interpretation of the critics, without the remotest wish to gloss over the shameful conduct of the Connecticut troops.

I cannot but be impressed, however, with the degree of consequence you attach to this word, even with its expletory modification. You have brought it twice into your History, and on one occasion with a note in the margin, informing your readers that it is among the "epithets carefully excluded from Mr. Sparks's compilation." I am bound to confess that I can see no harm in the epithet, and I shall not defend the omission. Whether it was omitted by accident or intentionally is more than my recollection will now enable me to declare. I would only be strenuous in contending, that the guilty Connecticut troops have gained nothing by its absence.

The "strange conduct" you mention, as an improper omission dictated by local predilections, has drawn you into an error scarcely less strange. You say Washington "complains of the inadequate supply of money from the Provincial Assemblies," and then infer that the exclamation was omitted because these Assemblies belonged to

New England. If you had attended to the whole sentence, you would have discovered that Washington was not speaking of the Assemblies, but complaining of the Continental Congress for not signing their paper currency with more promptness, while he was so much embarrassed for the want of money in the army. Your charge of a motive should therefore be withdrawn in this instance, however you may account for the disappearance of the exclamation.

That there may be no suspicion of a fraud upon history here, I will direct your attention to a letter touching the same subject written to a member of Congress a few days before the date of your quotation, and printed in its place. In that letter Washington says, "For God's sake hurry the signers of money, that our wants may be supplied. It is a very singular case, that their signing cannot keep pace with our demands." (Vol. III. p. 173.) Whether this "very singular case" amounts to more or less than "strange conduct," may be submitted to the calm judgment of any one, who has leisure to analyze the merits of the question.

In regard to "the noble Colonel Enos," I can see no good reason why the ironical epithet should have crept out. I should hesitate to deny that it was by my consent, yet I must affirm, that, hap-

pen as it might, it was by no deep design to shelter a New England officer from his just deserts, since I have stated the particulars of his case in a long note to one of Washington's letters. (Vol. III. p. 164.) He left Arnold on his perilous march through the wilderness to Quebec, and brought back his men. He was tried by a court-martial, and acquitted on the proof of a want of provisions. But public opinion was less indulgent, and hinted a suspicion of his firmness, if not of his valor. All this is fully explained to the reader, and the loss of the epithet, however much to be lamented, has certainly not contributed to screen the Colonel's character.

You have unaccountably mistaken the purport and drift of the next extract. You call Hancock "another New England officer." It is true, he had been a colonel of militia before the war, a station from which he was somewhat unceremoniously dismissed by General Gage. It will astonish most readers to be told, that he was at this time an officer in the New England army, since he had been for more than seven months President of the Continental Congress in Philadelphia.

Your abridgment of the passage also leads to an erroneous conclusion. Mr. Reed was in Philadelphia, and, in an answer to one of his letters, Washington wrote, "I do not very well under-

stand a paragraph in your letter, which seems to be taken from one of mine to Colonel Hancock, expressive of the unwillingness of the Connecticut troops to be deemed Continental. If you did not misconceive what Colonel Hancock read, he read what I never wrote, as there is no expression in any of my letters, that I can either recollect or find, that has a tendency that way." From this passage you infer that Washington intended to "express his suspicion," that President Hancock did actually pretend to read what he had never written, thereby inventing and promulgating a falsehood.

This would indeed be a formidable charge, but nothing is more clear, taking the whole passage in connection, than that Washington meant to express an opinion, in strong language, that Mr. Reed had misconceived what had been read. Whatever reason may be assigned for the omission, therefore, it could not have been a desire to protect the President of Congress from so injurious a suspicion, which certainly did not exist in the mind of Washington.

Next comes the unfortunate General Wooster; unfortunate in having been an old man, with a patriot's heart, when he would gladly have recalled the energy and youthful vigor, which he had bravely expended in former wars; but not un-

fortunate in having fallen in battle, a few months after the date to which you refer, while fighting for his country's freedom. Washington had "no opinion of his enterprising genius," alluding to the chief command which he then held in Canada. Surely he had not, as qualifying him for such a post. He expressed the same sentiments in other letters, which are printed in the work.

For instance; "General Wooster, I am informed, is not of such activity as to press through difficulties, with which that service is environed." (Vol. III. p. 119.) And again, after Wooster had generously consented to serve under General Montgomery during the campaign, Washington writes to General Schuyler; "My fears are at an end, as he acts in a subordinate capacity." (p. 143.) In what respect does the sense of these expressions differ from that of the sentence you cite, and wherein does the omission contribute to disguise Washington's opinion "of a third New England officer"? Besides, more than half the letter containing this sentence is omitted, as in other cases, to avoid repetition; and it is obvious upon the slightest inspection, that the reason for the omission was in no degree connected with what is said of General Wooster, or of any other individual.

Your reference to General Frye may be allowed to stand on its own merits. But your readers would

have been convinced that the charge of having sought in this instance to protect the reputation of a New England officer was groundless, if you had extended the quotation to the words printed in near connection with it. Washington there says, "I have heard of no other valiant son of New England waiting promotion, since the advancement of Frye, who has not, and I doubt will not, do much service to the cause." (Vol. III. p. 310.) Would the point of these caustic expressions be made sharper by the omitted sentence?

As the name of this gentleman has been thus dragged into notice, it is but justice to say a word more in relation to him. He had been a good officer in two wars, was at the capture of Louisburg in 1745, always commanded the respect of his countrymen, and was raised to the rank of Major-General of the Massachusetts forces five days before the battle of Bunker's Hill. He accepted his Continental commission with apparent reluctance, and held it but three months. That he "kept his room, and talked learnedly of emetics and cathartics," is highly probable; that the maladies of age were upon him is certain; but that history required these personal traits, common to infirm old men, and totally unconnected with his public character, to be commemorated in a formal manner, is at least questionable. As it is a matter of opinion, however, you may be

disposed to look upon it in a different light, to which I shall not object, saving the motive by which you have imagined me to be influenced.

Similar remarks may be made in regard to General Ward. I would again observe, that you frequently quote a single sentence, as if it constituted the whole of an omission, and then infer a motive or conjecture a reason as appertaining to that sentence only, whereas the fragment quoted by you is forced out of its place as an integral part of a paragraph, or several paragraphs taken collectively, which have been omitted for general reasons very remote from the one you assign. You must perceive that this is not a fair way of presenting the case, because the reader is deceived by it into a belief, that the passage was excluded with some special aim, when in reality it was not in the mind of the editor, except in connection with the whole. Your extract respecting General Ward is of this description. It occurs in the body of a long paragraph, which, with several others in the same letter, was omitted as containing unimportant matter, or a repetition of what is printed in other places. It is the letter in which the suicidal Loyalists are mentioned. I cannot charge myself, therefore, with having had any design in excluding this sentence, although, upon a revision, I think the part of the letter embracing it was properly omitted.

I shall forbear to examine the grounds of the "amusing description of a fifth New England officer," or to inquire into the causes of his resignation, the state of his health, or the arguments used to retain him in the service. We should not lose sight of justice, however, in attempting to conjecture his motives. General Ward had served with credit in the preceding war; and that he stood very high in public confidence is proved by the fact, that, after the affair at Lexington, he became Commander-in-chief of the New England troops, and, when the army was adopted by Congress as a Continental army, he was appointed second in command to Washington. No one has ventured to insinuate, that he did not perform the duties of these high stations with honor, fidelity, and a steady devotion to the cause of his country.

What local or personal incidents had taken place while Washington and these two officers were together in the camp at Cambridge, which induced the former, in his private and confidential correspondence afterwards, to indulge a sarcastic humor in speaking of them, it would be in vain now to inquire. But you charge me with a design to conceal the facts themselves from the public eye. You are doubtless acquainted with a work, entitled "Memoirs of Charles Lee," published sixty years ago in London, and several times reprinted in the United

States. In that volume you will find a private letter from Washington, expressing the same ideas concerning these officers, in the same tone, and almost the same language, as in the letters from which you quote (Lond. edition, p. 254). How, then, could I have been so far blinded as to hope to suppress facts, which had been before the world more than half a century, embodied in a popular work, widely circulated, and accessible to every reader ?

In what is said of "adoration to money," you again mistake in applying the censure to Massachusetts. Washington is speaking generally of the men of New England, and complaining of their tardiness in coming forward to enlist into the service. For this tardiness he gives a good reason in the same sentence, which you have overlooked. "The Congress expect, I believe, that I should do more than others; for, whilst they compel me to enlist without a bounty, they give forty dollars to others, which will, I expect, put an end to our enlistments." This exorbitant love of money, then, charged upon them in the vexation of the moment, was manifested by their backwardness to serve for smaller pay, than they understood to be allowed for the same service in other parts of the country.

But if you are really concerned lest history should suffer by any forbearance of mine towards the New England people in this omission, I beg

you will turn to a letter in "Washington's Writings," in which he says, "Such a dearth of public spirit, and such want of virtue, such stock-jobbing, and fertility in all the low arts to obtain advantages of one kind or another in this great change of military arrangement, I never saw before, and pray God's mercy that I may never be witness to again." (Vol. III. p. 178.) You are not ignorant of this passage, since you have inserted it in your History, with the same error of applying it to Massachusetts.

We have at length arrived at the last specification in your list. Washington wrote, "We have every thing but *the* thing ready for an offensive operation." How the three little words, "but *the* thing," escaped from their place, I cannot explain. I presume it was by an accident. I can see no possible objection to them. The collocation of the words is such, that they might easily be overlooked by a transcriber or printer. The importance you attach to them, however, as conveying a "representation of Washington's circumstances," is much overrated. If there is one thing more than another insisted upon in his letters during this period, it is his want of powder. Expressions like the following are of perpetual recurrence. "No quantity, however small, is beneath notice" (Vol. III. p. 47); "not sufficient to give twenty-

five musket cartridges to a man" (p. 70); "our want of powder is inconceivable" (p. 215). It is evident, therefore, that the three words are not of the least importance as indicating the condition of the army in regard to powder.

Moreover, you mistake in supposing Washington to complain of New England for having "failed to supply him with the gunpowder he needed." His complaint is not directed against New England alone. It was the business of Congress to furnish the Continental army with powder. There was little powder in the country, and of course little could be had. The manufacture of the article was not yet established. The New England Colonies, as well as the others, supplied all they could obtain. Ships were sent for it to France and the West Indies, but it took time for ships to sail across the ocean and return.

In another place you censure the omission of "a curious story told by Washington relative to his want of powder." And what mystery does this curious story reveal? Nothing more nor less than a blunder of a Committee of Supplies in making a return of the quantity of powder on hand. "I was particular in my inquiries," says Washington, "and found that the Committee of Supplies, not being sufficiently acquainted with the nature of a return, or misapprehending my

request, had sent in an account of all the ammunition which had been collected by the Province, so that the report included not only what was on hand, but what had been spent." The blunder was of course accidental, and was necessarily detected at once, so that no possible consequence could follow from it.

You deem this story so important, that you have inserted it in the text of your History, and carefully reminded your readers in a note, that it "is omitted in Mr. Sparks's edition." And you can discover no other motive for the omission, than an anxiety to conceal from the world the ignorance or misapprehension of a Massachusetts committee, although the whole passage is contained in the "Official Letters to Congress," (Vol. I. p. 21,) long before published, and in your hands. Nor do you intimate that the story stands in the midst of more than two pages, which were omitted obviously because they treat of local and temporary details of little moment.

All the cases in your list have now been examined; but there are others adduced by you, which, in your opinion, show "a desire to deal as tenderly as possible with any thing or any body that has the honor to be connected with New England." These will receive due consideration.

Washington had spoken of the "scandalous conduct of a great number of the Connecticut troops." The word "scandalous" has disappeared. How it happened I know not, and assuredly I am not disposed to defend the omission; nor is it one which I should intentionally have made. I observe that it is also wanting in the "Official Letters." (Vol. I. p. 56.) In both cases it may perhaps be fairly ascribed to accident. Yet I cannot agree that the Connecticut troops would have any reason to rejoice in its absence. Considering the manner in which the conduct of some of them is described on different occasions, in other letters printed in the work, no one can doubt that it was scandalous, even without the aid of this appropriate epithet.

Again, you remark, "Nor are we to be told of the Boston troops, that they were once extremely uneasy, and almost mutinous, for the want of pay"; and you ask the question, "Is it, or is it not, important to show how far Washington, at that period, could rely upon all his soldiers?" To which I reply, first, the sentence quoted by you makes part of a paragraph, the whole of which was omitted, with several others in the same letter, as containing unimportant details. Washington writes, "Having heard that the troops at Boston are extremely uneasy and almost mutinous for the want of pay,

(several months' being now due,) I must take the liberty to repeat the question contained in my letter of the 5th ultimo"; and then he asks, "Whether the money is to be sent from hence by the Paymaster-General, or some person subordinate to him to be appointed for that purpose?" It is obvious that he speaks of the uneasiness and "almost" mutinous spirit of the troops, not as an alarming circumstance, but with a view of hastening forward the money for their payment. I may also remark, that the omission could not have been out of any delicacy towards the New England troops, as is obvious from what is printed in another place, as follows; "The greater part of the troops are in a state not far from mutiny, upon the deduction from their stated allowance," (Vol. III. p. 104,) and from the fact, that the paragraph containing the omitted sentence is to be found in the "Official Letters." (Vol. I. p. 153.)

Secondly, as Washington was at that time in New York with the main army, it could have had very little influence upon his movements, or the military affairs of the country, if the detachment left in Boston had all mutinied and gone home. It was the military chest upon which he had first and mainly to rely; when that was full, his reliance on the soldiers was sufficiently safe; and in this respect I suppose these troops resem-

bled those of all countries. It is not probable that any commander could long rely on troops under voluntary enlistment, who were not paid.

You next bring up the case of two unworthy captains, Parker and Gardiner, who had been broken by a court-martial, the one for frauds upon his men, and the other for running away from his guard on an alarm. The paragraph conveying this intelligence to the President of Congress was omitted, and you regard the omission as indicative of New England partiality, and censurable because it was "important to show how far Washington at that period could rely upon all his officers." Do you really look upon the ill conduct of two militia officers as so momentous an affair? Or would you infer from it, that the other officers were to be suspected of cowardice and fraud, and that it indicated the general state of the army?

Again, you lay great stress on an omission of a similar kind in relation to Captain Callender, not in a "confidential letter," as you call it, for all Washington's official letters to the President of Congress were intended for that body, were read in open session, and usually referred to a committee. Washington wrote from the camp at Cambridge; "Upon my arrival, and since, some complaints have been preferred against officers for cowardice in the late action on Bunker's Hill. Though

there were several strong circumstances, and a very general opinion against them, none have been condemned except a Captain Callender of the artillery, who was immediately cashiered. I have been sorry to find it an uncontradicted fact, that the principal failure of duty that day was in the officers, though many of them distinguished themselves by their gallant behavior." This paragraph, in immediate connection with others narrating local incidents, was probably omitted because it contained no fact or circumstance, which was not perfectly well known, and which had not been repeatedly canvassed and discussed by American writers.

You ask, "Is not this a passage, which every future historian of Bunker's Hill has a right to be apprised of, and ought to bear in mind?" True, and he must be an historian of marvellously little reading on this subject, who has not been apprised of all it contains from various sources. The facts of Captain Callender's unhappy case, and indeed of nearly every other occurrence in that battle, are as familiar to the readers of American history, as that Prescott commanded in the redoubt, and Warren fell on the field.

Moreover, all the particulars relating to the points in question were published more than thirty years before "Washington's Writings" came from the press. Have you ever read Hubley's

"History of the American Revolution" ? Probably not, but, if you had taken that trouble, you would have seen an account of the proceedings of the courts-martial on the trials of these three delinquent captains, (Vol. I. pp. 352, 483,) published in detail from Washington's "Orderly-Books." Let me add, also, that, if you had extended your researches to the Appendix to the third volume of "Washington's Writings," (p. 489,) you might there have read a letter from the eminent patriot, Joseph Hawley, speaking with the utmost freedom of some of the officers at that time, as being "very equivocal in regard to courage." You would likewise have found a statement of Captain Callender's case (p. 490), with the additional facts, that he immediately afterwards joined the army as a volunteer, and, by signal acts of courage on several occasions, nobly redeemed the character he had lost at Bunker's Hill.

It should be observed, also, that examples of misbehaving officers were not peculiar to the New England troops. The "Orderly-Books" prove, that they happened throughout the war in the lines of the army from the different States, as they doubtless happen in all armies consisting of undisciplined troops recently drawn from the mass of the people. They are comparatively obscure and trivial incidents, having no influence upon the train of

events, and I could not deem it a duty to encumber the work with them to the exclusion of valuable materials. Whatever distinction may be made between the three cases you have noticed and others of the same class, I am constrained to believe that the importance you attach to these omissions is exaggerated, since not a single historical fact has been suppressed or disguised, and that your imagination has taken an extraordinary flight after a motive, when you ascribe it to a "desire to deal as tenderly as possible with any thing and any body that has the honor to be connected with New England."

You repeat the charge, before preferred in your History, that I had somewhere and somehow suppressed a passage containing a remonstrance from Washington to Congress for not fulfilling the Convention of Saratoga. You quote Mr. Adolphus as saying, in his "History of England," that "Washington remonstrated with force and firmness against this national act of dishonor"; and you add, "I found no such remonstrance as Mr. Adolphus mentions. Am I, then, to be blamed if I feel, or, if feeling, I express my suspicion that these words of remonstrance also may have been among the passages which you suppress?" Blame, my Lord, is of various gradations, and how far it may be applied to you in this instance I shall

forbear to decide. I cannot but express surprise, however, that you should be willing to venture such a charge, or utter such a suspicion, till you had verified the authority upon which Mr. Adolphus spoke, especially after your attention had been called to this point by an able writer in the *North American Review*. Mr. Adolphus cites the London edition of Washington's *Official Letters* (Vol. II. p. 266). Have you examined that reference? If so, you have found nothing which bears in the remotest degree upon this subject; and, moreover, if you search the two volumes through, you will be equally unsuccessful. I have seen no evidence that Washington ever made such a remonstrance, and must deny that he ever did so, till something in the shape of positive proof shall be produced.

I respect the memory of Mr. Adolphus; I have a grateful recollection of his personal civilities; I have been a witness of his arduous labors at an advanced age in procuring materials for the last and improved edition of his *History*; and I have entire confidence in his veracity; but I cannot yield assent to his unsupported declaration in a case like this, of which he could know nothing except from the testimony of others. Notwithstanding his assiduity in collecting facts, the parts of his *History* touching the American war abound in important errors. Some of these, relating to

events in America, were perhaps unavoidable; but it is difficult to account for his saying of the passage of the Stamp Act, that "no warning voice raised itself in the House of Commons, but the measure was suffered to pass through in silence," when it is unquestionable that there were two or three debates on the subject. Such men as Barré, Sir William Meredith, Conway, and Beckford, raised their voices loudly against the Act, and about fifty members voted in the negative.

As you have selected this case as one of the "particular omissions," which, in your mind, "tend to cast a shade of distrust over the entire work," I hope you will allow the shade to pass away, till you can make it appear, by at least a shadow of proof, that there is an omission.

I have now gone through with the process, which I fear your Lordship will have found somewhat tedious, of examining in detail every case you have produced in vindication of your various charges and suspicions. I have shown, first, that in every instance in which you have supposed facts to be suppressed or concealed, these facts are to be found in other parts of the work, or in other works long well known to the public; secondly, that you have frequently selected short sentences, or fragments of sentences, and conjectured some

special design for their omission, when in reality they were included in a paragraph, or larger portion of a letter, omitted for reasons in no manner relating to the purport of these sentences; thirdly, that your main charge of a personal motive, prompting me to protect Washington's dignity, and the good name of the people of New England, at the expense of historical justice, is not sustained by facts, reasonable inferences, or probability.

On this last topic something more may be said. You seem apprehensive that your own motives may be misunderstood, and hence you endeavor to guard them by the following remarks.

"I should be sorry if it were thought that I desired, by the production of such omitted phrases, to deny the unquestionable merits of the New England States in their Revolutionary War. But I consider it requisite to prove — and the more so since, as I venture to think, the fact is too often overlooked on your side of the Atlantic — that their cause, like every other cause, had its dark as well as its bright side. And if you, as the editor of Washington's Correspondence, are shown to leave out systematically those facts or those opinions by which the dark side is to be proved, then I, for my part, must continue to maintain that you, Sir, have, according to my former words, 'tampered with the truth of history.'"

How far my countrymen, as well out of New England as in it, may think themselves obliged by this endeavor to show them "the dark as well as bright side" of their local history, I am not prepared to say. I should not be surprised, however, if, from the self-esteem in which they are sometimes thought not to be deficient, they should imagine themselves as well informed on a subject of this kind, as they could hope to be by any light imparted to them from the other side of the Atlantic. In short, I think you mistake in supposing, that any intelligent man in America is not as well acquainted with the dark as with the bright side of the Revolutionary measures in all parts of the country. It would be a waste of labor, in my opinion, to attempt to teach them any new lessons on these characteristics of their history.

In the above extract you insinuate, nay, you almost declare, that I have "systematically" left out facts and opinions, with the express design of perverting the testimony of history. Has this been proved by the examples you have produced? On the contrary, has it not been shown in every instance, that the facts and opinions left out are recorded in other places, and well known? Are you sure, my Lord, that you are perfectly candid in speaking thus? Why use this equivocal language? Why say that, "if" I have "systemati-

cally" done so, then I have "tampered with the truth of history"? It may be that you and I do not attach the same meaning to this sentence. To tamper with truth of any kind is, in my apprehension, a highly criminal act. It implies a defect, not of judgment, but of principle. It cannot appear strange, therefore, that, viewing it in this light, I should consider such a charge as an assumption little consistent with your Lordship's character.

You have published an edition of "Chesterfield's Letters," in which, doubtless for good reasons, you have left out letters comprised in other editions. Suppose some critic should examine these omitted letters, select from them sentences, or parts of sentences, containing pointed expressions or facts which he may deem important, and then charge you with personal motives in such omissions, and tampering with truth. Would you regard this as a fair or liberal construction of your motives? I presume not. Yet a case like this would be parallel to those of several of the examples you have brought forward as proofs of such a charge.

You speak of "embellishments," and seem strenuous to maintain, that I have sought to embellish Washington's letters by omissions. The sense in which you would have this word understood is not very clear. To embellish means to adorn. Your

first charge of additions might give countenance to the idea of embellishments, but you have withdrawn that charge, and how omissions are to be made ornamental you have not explained. As this is merely an opinion, however, a peculiar fancy of your own not touching facts, I am willing you should continue to entertain the opinion upon such grounds as are satisfactory to yourself.

It must seem strange to most readers, that your Lordship, in a distant country, should be the first to discover the partiality, which you allege to have been shown to the people of New England in the preparation for the press of a selection from Washington's papers. Fifteen years have elapsed since the publication of that work, and yet no American writer in any part of the Union, however much his perceptions may have been quickened by local attachments and predilections, however sensitive to the merits of his own State or district in the war of the Revolution, has made known such a discovery, or intimated such a suspicion. How do you account for what you assume to be a fact, that you are so much better informed on this subject, than writers in America, who have every inducement, from personal feeling, and from political as well as social sympathies, to examine it in all its relations? The simple truth is, that the discovery itself is a dream of fancy, and the more thoroughly it is in-

vestigated, the more completely it will be proved to be such.

You appear to have been beguiled into misconceptions by not attending with sufficient care to local causes and circumstances, and to the actual state of things throughout the country. It happened that the war of the Revolution began in New England, unexpectedly at the time and without preparation on the part of the inhabitants. Soon after the affair at Lexington, an army was drawn together at Cambridge, which, at the time Washington took the command, amounted to about sixteen thousand men, two thirds of whom were from Massachusetts. How was this army constituted? Mostly of men who had suddenly left their ploughs at the call of their country, and in the expectation of a brief term of service. Among the native inhabitants there was scarcely a soldier by profession in all the Colonies. With very few exceptions, the men destined to fill the ranks of the army were practical farmers or mechanics. The officers were nearly all from the same classes.

With these materials an army was to be formed and organized, consisting of independent yeomanry, volunteers, mostly without military experience or discipline; and, when their short term of service had expired, a new army was to be raised from similar materials, and placed under new officers and

new arrangements. All this was to be done, while the whole force of the enemy was stationed within three miles of Washington's head-quarters, and supported by a strong naval armament in the harbor of Boston.

The embarrassments and difficulties of such an undertaking may easily be conceived, especially as the civil authority, not yet consolidated, was very feeble, and the military power was not recognized beyond the camp. No wonder that the Commander-in-chief, pressed on all sides by the most harassing vexations, should occasionally show impatience, and utter loud complaints. The wonder is, that he bore himself under them with so much fortitude and self-command. You are inclined to attribute these vexations to the peculiar character of the people, their want of patriotism, and their absorbing self-interest. But the truth is, they existed in the very nature of things, in the state of society and the structure of the human mind, precisely as they would exist in any country placed under the like circumstances.

If the war had begun in any other part of the Union, similar results must have followed. This is so obvious to those, who have had opportunities of forming a correct judgment from a knowledge of all the facts, that no one in America has ever drawn comparisons unfavorable to the exertions of

New England during that period ; nor has it been intimated that the New England States did not contribute, with alacrity and promptness, their full proportion of men and means in support of the contest throughout the war.

But it is not my purpose to vindicate a people, who need no vindication. Nor should I have touched upon the subject, if you had not made their supposed want of public virtue and high character in some measure the groundwork of your charges against my editorial fidelity. I am convinced, that your premises and conclusions are alike erroneous and unjust. I am convinced, that no incidents in the history of the period in question have been recorded, which any intelligent man in New England would desire to have concealed ; and I can affirm, that the idea of such concealment never entered my thoughts, till it was suggested by your suspicions and charges.

I have thus examined all the parts of your letter which relate to my edition of " Washington's Writings." The plan upon which the work was executed, and the principles adopted in carrying out the plan, are so fully explained in my Reply to your former strictures, and in the work itself, that no further remarks on those topics are required.

In making a selection from the large mass of

papers left by Washington, extending over a long period, and extremely various in their character, an editor could not expect to escape from occasional errors of judgment and opinion. Such errors are fair subjects of criticism; but when you assail motives, and thus call in question the editor's fidelity and rectitude, you give a wide range to a critic's privilege. I trust my sensibility to what I esteem your unfounded animadversions has not betrayed me beyond the proper line of courtesy, nor diminished the respect which I have been accustomed to entertain for you as an author and a man; and with which

I have the honor to be, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient servant,

JARED SPARKS.

CAMBRIDGE, October 25th, 1852.

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